



Color, grisaille and pictorial techniques in works by Jean Pucelle

Pascale Charron

► To cite this version:

Pascale Charron. Color, grisaille and pictorial techniques in works by Jean Pucelle. Kyunghee nPyun, Anna D. Russakoff. Jean Pucelle. Innovation and collaboration in manuscript painting, Harvey Miller publishers, pp.91-110, 2013, 978-1-905375-46-2. halshs-00949845

HAL Id: halshs-00949845

<https://shs.hal.science/halshs-00949845>

Submitted on 22 Feb 2014

HAL is a multi-disciplinary open access archive for the deposit and dissemination of scientific research documents, whether they are published or not. The documents may come from teaching and research institutions in France or abroad, or from public or private research centers.

L'archive ouverte pluridisciplinaire **HAL**, est destinée au dépôt et à la diffusion de documents scientifiques de niveau recherche, publiés ou non, émanant des établissements d'enseignement et de recherche français ou étrangers, des laboratoires publics ou privés.

Color, grisaille and pictorial techniques in works by Jean Pucelle

"The study of colour and painting technique is surely one of the most difficult and indeed dangerous tasks for an art historian"¹. Nigel Morgan's introductory remark to his 1986 study of color in late thirteenth-century English and French illuminations still resonates with art historians working on color in manuscript paintings, for the task is indeed difficult and dangerous in many ways. Investigation of color in the work of an illuminator should be predicated on accessibility to all of his pictorial works and in-depth study of good, abundant color reproductions. Regarding the oeuvre of Jean Pucelle, his workshop, and his collaborators, these two conditions are still far from being fulfilled. Although some of the major works are assembled in collections in and around Paris (*Robert de Bylling Bible*, Paris, BnF lat. 11935; the *Belleville Breviary*, Paris, BnF lat. 10483-10484; the *Miracles de Notre Dame* by Gautier de Coincy, Paris, BnF nouv. acq. fr. 24541; the *Hours of Jeanne de Savoie*, Paris, Musée Jacquemart-André, Ms. 1; the *Montier-en-Der Missal*, Bibliothèque Mazarine, Ms. 419; the *Breviary of Jeanne d'Evreux*, Chantilly, Musée Condé, Ms. 51)², Pucelle's production nevertheless has not, as a whole, escaped the geographic dispersal which traditionally complicates viewing (the *Hours of Jeanne d'Evreux*, New York, The Cloisters, Acc. 54.1.2; the *Breviary of Blanche de France*, Rome, Vatican Library, Ms. Cod. Urb. Lat. 603; the *Waddesdon Psalter*, Waddesdon Manor, Rothschild Collection, Ms. 2). This fundamental difficulty, typical of a great number of illuminated works, is not satisfactorily

¹ Nigel Morgan, "Aspects of Colour in English and French Manuscript Painting in the late 13th Century" In *Europäische Kunst um 1300, Akten des XXV Internationalen Kongresses für Kunstgeschichte*, Wien 4-10/09/1986 (Vienna 1986), 111.

² I am very grateful to the curators and librarians of the institutions which allowed me access to the manuscripts and provided excellent working conditions: Marie-Pierre Lafitte and Maxence Hermant at the Bibliothèque nationale de France; Christian Peligry at the Bibliothèque Mazarine; Nicolas Sainte-Fare Garnot and Hélène Couot at the Musée Jacquemart-André; Aude Lefevre at the Musée Condé in Chantilly. I have not consulted the manuscripts in collections in the United States, the United Kingdom or in Italy.

met by reproductions, for Jean Pucelle's oeuvre – despite being one of the major corpora in the history of early fourteenth-century European painting – is not widely reproduced and when it is, mainly only in black and white³. Furthermore, the quality of the color reproductions is rarely representative of that of the original work; therefore under no circumstances should analysis be made solely on the basis of reproductions.

The relative inaccessibility of the complete corpus of Pucelle's manuscript paintings no doubt has oriented the art historical studies that have focused on the painter's oeuvre ever since Léopold Delisle's foundational work⁴. Indeed, attention should be drawn to the dearth of studies on the subject of color. Studies of grisaille in the master's work have tended to eclipse those of his full-color illuminations despite the fact that the greater part of his production is in color. While Kathleen Morand⁵, François Avril⁶ and Jeffrey Hamburger⁷ do analyze the painter's palette to better qualify his stylistic language and attempt to shed light on the question of a workshop, it is nevertheless Jean Pucelle's grisaille, more specifically his illustrations of the *Hours of Jeanne d'Evreux*, that are the best known of the painter's works even if their attribution has been up for debate since the mid-twentieth century⁸. In addition to Michaela Krieger's research on grisaille in the fourteenth century⁹, of which a significant part

³ Color reproductions of the images painted by Jean Pucelle and his collaborators are few and far between. At present only the *Hours of Jeanne d'Evreux* have been entirely reproduced in color (on CD-ROM, by the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York); the other manuscripts are known mainly through black and white reproductions and a few rare color images, most of which are the same from one study to the next.

⁴ Léopold Delisle, *Les Heures dites de Jean Pucelle. Manuscrit de la collection de M. le Baron Maurice de Rothschild*, Paris, 1910; Léopold Delisle, *Recherches sur la librairie de Charles V* (Paris 1907).

⁵ Kathleen Morand, *Jean Pucelle* (Oxford 1962).

⁶ François Avril, "Manuscrits"; "Bible de Robert de Billyng", "Heures de Jeanne d'Evreux", "Bréviaire de Belleville", "Gautier de Coincy, Miracles de Notre-Dame". In *Les Fastes du Gothique, Le siècle de Charles V*, Exhib. Cat., Paris, Galeries Nationales du Grand-Palais, oct. 1981-février 1982, 276-282; 291-296.

⁷ Jeffrey Hamburger, "The Waddesdon Psalter and the Shop of Jean Pucelle", *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte* 44 (1981), 243-257.

⁸ Delisle's identification of *The Hours of Jeanne d'Evreux* in the Cloisters with the volume mentioned in Jeanne d'Evreux's codicil and the inventories of the property of Charles V was called into question for the first time by Blum in "Jean Pucelle et la miniature parisienne", *Scriptorium* 3 (1949), 211, and since then has been discussed many times.

⁹ Michaela Krieger, *Grisaille als Metapher. Zum Entstehen der Peinture en Camaïeu im frühen 14. Jahrhundert*, (Vienne 1995), 30-32.

is devoted to this manuscript, the codex was the first to be reproduced *in extenso*¹⁰ and remains the most often cited of Jean Pucelle's works¹¹. Considered by partisans of its Pucellian identity¹² to be the master's sole autograph work, it also has tended to overshadow the other *codices* which, apart from the *Breviary of Jeanne d'Evreux*, were all executed in full color.

The study of color in Pucelle's works cannot be isolated from the question of a workshop and collaborators behind the manuscript paintings attributed to the artist. This subject has been treated in depth by Kathleen Morand and François Avril, whose research has made it possible to better distinguish the various hands at work in the manuscripts. The minute analysis offered here of the color and techniques employed in the very many miniatures, historiated initials, and drolleries in the actual manuscripts returns to this question by distinguishing a number of technical practices applied on a shared formal basis along with a differentiation of color by manuscript. Analysis of manuscripts attributed to the master point to varied usage of color, line and modeling. This confirms the existence of a group of artists working together on certain works and isolates certain hands while posing the problem of their identification. The present study also puts analysis of color and technical processes to the test as criteria for identifying the hands. Although their diversity, or inversely, their consistency can certainly help to distinguish between the various illuminators involved, such analyses do not allow a definitive position to be taken or propose a reconstitution of the division of labor as Jean Pucelle, as *chef d'atelier*, might have organized it.

The second question pertains to the reasons behind the original and rare choice of grisaille in manuscript painting (sometimes added to full color in the second volume of the

¹⁰ The images were reproduced in full as helio-engravings by Léopold Delisle, *Les Heures dites de Jean Pucelle. Manuscrit de la collection de M. le Baron Maurice de Rothschild* (Paris 1910).

¹¹ François Avril published many images of it in *Manuscript Painting at the Court of France. The Fourteenth Century, 1310-1380* (New York 1978), plates 3-10.

¹² François Avril, "Heures de Jeanne d'Evreux". In *Les Fastes du Gothique*, 292-296.

*Belleville Breviary*¹³). The practice of gray monochrome painting or "camaïeu" is obviously at the heart of the matter. It must be placed at the core of the contemporary practice of the ink and camaïeu "pourtrait" in illuminations, and its correlation with metal and color in precious decorative objects.

Palette and pictorial techniques: a contribution to the question of the work of Jean Pucelle and his collaborators

Analyzing color and techniques within the oeuvre that is currently grouped together under the name of Jean Pucelle in no small measure means investigating the coherence of the oeuvre and the presence of the several hands at work behind this one name. It is, moreover, upon this collaborative work that the stylistic identity of the master is founded, because the only two manuscripts bearing his name also feature those of four of his collaborators. Marginal notes in the *Belleville Breviary*¹⁴ mention Jean Pucelle as head of the workshop, alongside Mahiet, Ancelet and Jehan Chevrier. The "lingne de vermeillon"¹⁵ inscribed a few years later in tiny lettering at the bottom of folio 642 of the *Billyng Bible* attributes the illumination of the book to the same Pucelle and Anciau de Cens (identified as the Ancelet in the *Breviary*¹⁶) who were associated with Jaquet Maci.¹⁷ These two manuscripts, corresponding to Jean Pucelle's activity between 1334 and 1337, after his return from Italy,

¹³ BnF lat. 10484, f. 2, month of January. The sign of Aquarius at the top of the folio and the figure of Janus with a grotesque at the bottom were executed in grisaille, as are the figures of Pisces, the man warming himself before the fire, and the grotesques on the verso. The rest of the volume is in color.

¹⁴ Manuscript dated to 1324-1326.

¹⁵ "Jehan Pucelle, Anciau de Cens, Jaquet Maci, il hont enluminé ce livre ci. Ceste lingne de vermeillon que vous vees fu escrite en lan de grace M.CCC et XXVII en un jueudi darrenier jour d'avril, veille de mai, Vo die".

(Jean Pucelle, Anciau de Sens, Jacquet Maci: they illuminated this present book. The line of red that you see was written in the year of grace 1327 on a Thursday, the last day of April and the eve of May" [Thursday, 30 April 1327]). Translation and transcription from R.H. Rouse and M.A. Rouse, *Manuscripts and Their Makers. Commercial Book Producers in Medieval Paris 1200-1500*. 2 vols. (Turnhout 2000) 1: 264 and note 22.

¹⁶ Léopold Delisle, *Les Heures dites de Jean Pucelle*, 30; cited by François Avril in *Les Fastes du Gothique*, 294.

¹⁷ François Avril, "Un enlumineur ornementaliste parisien de la première moitié du XIV^e siècle: Jacobus Mathey (Jaquet Maci?)", *Bulletin monumental* 129 (1971), 249-264.

have a very consistent formal repertory associated with partly shared colors and techniques. Nevertheless, the variations in palette, from pale to saturated, as well as the changes made to them point to the mentions in the manuscripts and attest clearly to the work of several hands within them.

If one looks closely at the palette used in the *Breviary* and the *Bible*, the two works documented as Pucelle's, one feature is clear from the start: the variety and richness of the colors in the two works. This is also a characteristic of the entire production of the workshop of Pucelle and his collaborators and successors in the following decades. Back in 1910, Léopold Delisle, in his description of the *Billyng Bible*¹⁸, had already noted the "the elegance of the drawing, the expression of the attitudes of the figures, and *especially the harmony of the colors*", thus emphasizing one of the essential components of the manner of Jean Pucelle. Breaking with the palette limitations of works from the preceding century, which were composed mainly of blue and red more or less mixed with white on gold-leaf backgrounds, the range of colors employed increased dramatically and was accompanied by a great many variations based mainly upon the interplay of light and saturation, brilliance and matte, all of which contributed to its richness.

François Avril describes the palette of the *Belleville Breviary* as "rich and saturated"¹⁹, which he feels distinguishes it from that of the other manuscripts attributed to Pucelle. Kathleen Morand remarks that "some of the best miniatures" have "a brilliance and subtlety of colouring which may pay tribute to Duccio's imaginative palette"²⁰. My reading of the palette used in the *Breviary* does not distinguish it so radically from the chromatics of other Pucellian works, in which richness and brilliance are constants. Nevertheless it is entirely judicious to note that its colors are more varied than in the manuscript paintings produced subsequently,

¹⁸ Léopold Delisle, *La Bible de Robert de Billyng et de Jean Pucelle*, excerpted from the *Revue de l'art chrétien* (Paris 1910), 2.

¹⁹ *Les Fastes du gothique*, 294.

²⁰ Kathleen Morand, *Jean Pucelle*, 12.

and that the latter show a saturation in some places which tends to darken the image. While the transparent, pale blues and pinks, gray, plum, orange and pine green feature abundantly in the *Breviary*, as would be true of the other manuscripts, colors that are quantitatively rarer in the corpus of images are also found, such as emerald green, purplish mauve, gray-tinted pale blue and pink, or brown mixed with orange. Furthermore, opaque and saturated colors make their appearance, like deep pink and green, dark blue or vibrant orange which do not break with the main palette but inflect it by intensifying it. In addition to these variations in color and tone are irregularities in the techniques of applying the pictorial layer. One can, in fact, distinguish several ways of using color within the *Breviary*. While color appears throughout Pucelle's œuvre as the privileged tool for creating volume for the various components of the image, it is also sometimes reduced to simple, juxtaposed flat colored surfaces on which folds are rendered with ink lines. The plastic value of these flat backgrounds is confined to the visual contrasts they cause. These variants – which may be interpreted either as the sign of speedily executed work or as a usage not yet entirely free of traditional color practices in the early fourteenth century – can be correlated, in this context, with the various mentions of payment inscribed in the *Breviary* as well as with the hypotheses to which they give rise.

Kathleen Morand²¹ and François Avril²² are not in agreement over the importance of two of the three artists who worked on the *Breviary* with Jean Pucelle. For both experts, the *maître d'oeuvre* was incontestably Pucelle, as indicated by the mention on folio 33 ("Mahiet. Jean Pucelle a baillé XX et III s. VI d.") as well as by the formal consistency of the manuscript art as a whole. Their interpretations of the last part of the mention differ significantly, however, as do their readings of the one concerning Ancelet on folio 62. François Avril believes that the three artists (Ancelet, Mahiet and Chevrier) executed the secondary decoration: "borders with vignettes, line-endings, and possibly the figures or

²¹ "Jean Pucelle: A Re-Examination of the Evidence", *Burlington Magazine*, 103 (1961), 206-211.

²² *Les Fastes du gothique*, 294

hybrids on baguette terminals"²³. He does not see any of them participating in coloring the images, and believes that the difference in the saturation of hues and "pictorial execution" from the other documented Pucellian works lies in the participation of the Master of the Ceremonial of Gand, an artist who was identified and studied by Kathleen Morand²⁴. She, however, offers a contrasting reading of the manuscript mentions to make sense of the difference in the terms used, correlating them with the gatherings on which they were inscribed. Ancelet and Jean Chevrier were each paid an unknown amount for decorating a gathering (as indicated by the mention "*pro p[ecia]*"²⁵). The omission of the exact sum paid for their work may be explained by a flat-rate fee for a simple decoration job²⁶. Indeed, the gatherings in question are devoid of miniatures. Ancelet was thus paid for the quire starting on folio 62²⁷, in which the majority of leaves feature grotesques in the margins. The faces and hair of the figures are drawn in brown ink and quickly modeled with white highlighting and lines or touches of orangish brown wash²⁸. The same treatment occurs a number of times in the two volumes that make up the *Breviary*. The figures sometimes wear clothing of dark burgundy, a rare color in this work, where it seems to have been reserved primarily for grounds (vol. 1, ff. 97, 114v, vol. 2, f. 223) and drolleries (vol. 2, f. 231v). The quire that Jean Chevrier was paid for features simple marginal decorations consisting of vignettes and stereotype dragon motifs which are repeated several times throughout the two volumes.

²³ *Les Fastes du gothique*, 294

²⁴ Kathleen Morand, *Jean Pucelle*, 43-45.

²⁵ Use of the mention *pro pecia* refers to the organization of work by gathering as developed around Italian universities, such as the university of Bologna, and which the Dominicans had introduced to Paris by 1250. On this topic, see Rouse and Rouse, *Manuscripts and Their Makers* 1: 85-87. Traces of the same kind of annotations, meant to disappear when the volume was bound, are visible at the end of the first volume on folios 332 and 340, which correspond to the start of a quire. I believe I was able to read the letter J, which could refer to Jean Chevrier, where Delisle notes only erased traces (*Les Heures dites de Jean Pucelle*, 31). The decoration of the gatherings in question consists entirely of vignettes.

²⁶ Kathleen Morand, *Jean Pucelle*, 211.

²⁷ ff. 62/69v: quire 4/4

²⁸ There are no grotesques in the following quire (ff. 70/77). These reappear in the next quire after that, but the faces are drawn in black ink and highlighted with uniform white paint. The same is true of the quire starting on folio 96.

It therefore seems entirely possible to determine the parts the two artists' played in the *Breviary*, with the work of the young Anciau de Sens continuing its course identically in the *Billyng Bible* several years later. The breakdown and payment of work by quire also points to the subcontracting of tasks; this can be quickly understood because of the partial preservation of claim. Many gatherings are thus shown as having only vignettes and dragons to which were added other grotesque motifs. The accounting notes inscribed at the bottom of the gatherings indicate, then, that those were artists who were not part of the workshop, and whose work therefore had to be strictly identified before being paid for. The presence of Anciau de Sens in the project confirms this hypothesis because this illuminator was very likely attached to the family of the *libraire* and stationer Guillaume de Sens, who resided on the Left Bank on rue Saint-Jacques, not far from rue Erembourg de Brie where Jean Pucelle's workshop was located²⁹.

The question of Mahiet's participation in the *Breviary* is posited differently because his entry is much more precise, and is also placed in the middle of a gathering of which two leaves are lavishly historiated and illuminated. Unlike the two other artists, Mahiet was not paid a flat rate, but received a significant sum (23 *sols* and 6 *deniers*) for a task whose nature was not recorded³⁰. Two hypotheses can be raised here. The amount could correspond to a set of tasks spread out over several quires assembled in the workshop at the time when the work was counted and payment was distributed. However, in line with the system that seems to have been followed – reporting work gathering by gathering, as the two mentions concerning Chevrier confirm – the payment might also correspond solely to what was on folios 31 and 37. Yet the oddity lies in the fact that the mention appears on the third leaf of a gathering

²⁹ About the family of Guillaume, Marguerite, André and Thomas de Sens, *libraires* and stationers, and for the location of rue Erembourg de Brie (now rue Boutebrie) and rue Saint-Jacques in fourteenth-century Paris, see Rouse, *Manuscripts and their Makers*, 1: 81-97; map 3, "The Left Bank".

³⁰ It is still difficult to find reliable elements of comparison for these accounting entries. Nevertheless, the sum does appear considerable compared to the 39 *sols* paid to Robert (Robin) des Fontaines on 31 May 1398 for illuminating a little book on the life of St. Margaret for Queen Isabeau of Bavaria or the 108 *sols* received by the same artist on 1 October 1398 for illuminating the Hours of the Cross and of the Holy Spirit and other saints' 'mémoires'. Rouse and Rouse, *Manuscripts and their Makers*, 2: 129.

which contains eight, rather than on the first, as was true of the other mentions analyzed above.

An examination of the various types of decoration on the two folios shows considerable consistency in the forms and techniques employed, as well as in the colors. The image in the left column depicts St. Peter praying in his boat, facing God who is emerging from the clouds. In the right margin, at the same height as the miniature, springing forth vertically from the vignettes, are two fighting grotesques face to face. On the baguette in the lower margin appear, from left to right, Delilah cutting Samson's hair, the image of the Confirmation, and an image of Constance (Fortitude). Rounding out the decoration, a grotesque in the right margin is playing death music by blowing into a bellows³¹. The image of St. Peter is set apart from the drolleries as well as from the *marginalia* through the use of saturated colors. The boat is the only pale element in the image, whose yellow-tinted brown is heightened with white to lend volume to the vessel. St. Peter, wearing an orange mantel highlighted with green and a dark blue robe, stands out from the background of saturated blue livened by a checkered pattern treated in diamond-point fashion with white and red relief-work. The marginal figures are associated with lighter shades (pale pink, orange, green, blue) laid down rapidly, echoing the image of the saint. His face is drawn with simple ink lines very slightly highlighted with brown, and the eyes are empty, without pupils. This palette, in conjunction with a rapid technique that omitted finishing touches to the eyes, is identical to that of the first leaf of the quire (f. 31) featuring the image of Absalom. The saturated blue checkered background scattered with light blue and red dots contrasts with the gray of the robe, the dusky rose of the mantle, and its orange lining. A single pine green color is used for the footwear of David's son, the ground, and the trees. Limited attention seems to have been devoted to the modeling of the body. The articulation of the horseman's torso under his mantle

³¹ Martine Clouzot, *Le Musicien en images ; l'iconographie des musiciens et de leurs instruments de musique dans les manuscrits du nord de la France, de la Belgique, des Pays-Bas, de l'Angleterre et de l'Allemagne du XIIIe au XVe siècle*, doctoral dissertation, EHESS, 1995.

is not achieved by the drapery, as it is overly complex and therefore removed from anatomical logic. The scene as a whole appears flat. If the bulk of the gray dappled horse has greater detail because of the crosshatching of rather thick white lines on its rump, the whole is still of slight technical refinement without the finesse of the camaïeu developed in some of the other images. The colors used for the marginalia contrast with the miniatures because they belong to a paler, unsaturated range. The pale pink and blue clothing of the clothing of the Church on folio 31 recall those of Delilah on folio 37. The flat color is worked speedily, highlighted only with a few lines to mark the shading of the hollows of the folds in the robes.

The hand of Mahiet should no doubt be restored to these two folios. His saturated palette is one of his major stylistic characteristics, in François Avril's opinion, and this is borne out in the codex of the *Vie et miracles de saint Louis* by Guillaume de Saint-Pathus, dated to the years 1330-1340³². This manuscript, whose style derives from the manner of Jean Pucelle, sets forth a very rich palette that has the particularity of associating a few light colors with vivid, saturated hues as in the *Breviary*. Gray, pink, and plum abundantly mixed with white, set side by side with deeper pink, violet, sulfur yellow, frosted chestnut or emerald green. These recall most specifically the folios of the *Breviary* that are associated with Mahiet. His work on color in this manuscript varies in accordance with the degree of saturation because the more intense colors are less modeled than the lighter hues. In an interplay of juxtapositions, creating strong contrasts between the various surfaces and the depth rendered by camaïeu wrought with thin lines of saturated color on a pale base, the illuminator brings forth sparkling, dynamic images. In this manuscript Mahiet demonstrates greater mastery of volume although his practice of color remains in certain ways more attached to enlivening surfaces than to rendering depth.

³²

Paris, BnF, Ms. fr. 5716, François Avril, *Les Fastes du gothique*, 299-300.

Nevertheless, reading the color palette together with the execution of the images in the gathering where Mahiet's name appears does not make it possible to isolate his hand in the *Breviary* given the degree to which practices seem to be mixed throughout its two volumes. Within these codices, saturation and brilliance of the palette do not always go hand in hand with rapid technique and variable handling of volume, such as in anatomical articulation. The Crucifixion of Saint Andrew on folio 97 (vol. I) is rendered in a dark palette, with a checkered pattern traced in thick gold lines on a deep burgundy background assorted with the executioners' dark green and blue garments and the saint's gray robe. The pale pink robe of the executioner seated on the ground does not lighten the composition, which is dominated by the saturation of the background. Yet the whole image is highly modeled thanks to these same colors whose tones are handled *en camaïeu*. Moreover, some leaves display colors from the darkest to the lightest, associated with a rendering of volumes with pronounced variation of depth. On the other hand, some folios associate rapidity and virtuosity of technique, as in the two gatherings preceding the one where Mahiet is mentioned. In these, the same very saturated and very vibrant palette is employed (ff. 17v and 28). The bright orange robes of David and Hope, as well as the giant Goliath's armor – where the blue sparkles like metal in sunlight thanks to the finesse of the white highlighting -- are strongly modeled by means of color wrought with minute parallel lines invisible to the naked eye. Yet the drawing was executed rapidly, as is shown once again by the absence of pupils in the figures' eyes. On these two folios appear nature motifs whose illusionistic rendering is no less than exceptional. The iris in the margins of folio 17v, along with the dragonfly, sweet peas, snail, or pheasant and capuchin monkey hanging by an arm from the vignette that emerges from the lefthand border bar on folio 28 are as many elements that have no equivalent in the other images.

While the study of color palettes shows its limitations here, in terms of distinguishing between hands, what it does reveal is the close collaboration of artists in illumination

workshops at the end of the Middle Ages. They participated, sometimes conjointly, in the decoration of the same leaves. Nevertheless, exactly how their work was organized between the execution of miniatures and marginal ornamentation remains unknown to us.

Color application techniques and the practice of image miniaturization

The manuscripts executed entirely in color under the leadership of Jean Pucelle after the *Belleville Breviary* use a more limited and more regular range of colors. In the *Bible* copied by Robert de Billyng in 1327, as in the *Miracles de Notre-Dame* by Gautier de Coincy or the *Montier-en-Der Missal*, a set of colors with dominant pale pinks and blues, along with a pure gray sometimes tending towards plum, a brown with deep burgundy accents, bright orange, saturated, occasionally darkened blue and red, sulfur yellow, pine green that is either dull or tending towards yellow, and emerald green. Coloring is worked by contrasts, with an intense color apposed near a lightened color. The images are then constructed according to a dynamic that draws on the highly colored grounds enlivened by the variety of their motifs. As in the *Breviary*, color is also used in most of the images to model the figures and some architectural elements like the den in the scene of the prophet, Daniel. Here the bottom of the den espouses the concave form of an oven vault as a result of specific treatment of the gray (*Bible* f. 445). The variations in hues, from the lightest to the darkest, from gray to plum or from green to yellow, are wrought through subtle shadings whose transitions are invisible to the naked eye.

The technique employed raises the question of image miniaturization in the work of Pucelle. In the manuscripts under study, the average image dimensions are 30 mm by 25/30 mm. Decorative elements like figures or objects are represented using a fine network of lines (visible only through a magnifying glass) against a color ground. Moses's mantle in the *Crossing of the Red Sea* on folio 29v of the *Bible* is made up of a gray-infused white base to which are added fine lines of gray and plum, producing a tint that appears bluish and mauve-

nuanced to the naked eye. The blue robe likewise consists of a very clear base with vertical lines of a more sustained blue in the hollows of the folds, creating an illusionistic effect of volume. This process, where a clear base is overlapped with parallel lines applied most likely with a single-hair brush because of their extreme finesse, is used side by side with another approach that seeks to yield the same effects. Here, a base of median color is applied and lightened or darkened by extremely fine lines. The mantle of the prophet Micah is treated in this manner (*Bible*, f. 468). The surface is painted in plum gray and worked in camaïeu, its lighter and darker gradations wrought with fine parallel lines. The miniaturization of images thus relates to pictorial practices where such tremendous technical mastery is possible only through the use of “expectacles pour lire” -- spectacles for reading -- which make their appearance at the very start of the thirteenth century³³. While the use of magnifying eyeglasses by miniaturists remains uncorroborated by archival sources, their invention in Italy at the end of the twelfth century and their use in the milieu of the mendicant orders prove that they spread rapidly in university contexts, and therefore to the world of *libraires*³⁴. Without going so far as to associate the hypothesis of the Pucelle atelier's use of such magnifying glasses with the artist's travels in Italy, it would appear that the miniaturization of his images reflects new practices in optics at the beginning of the fourteenth century³⁵.

³³ Charles Sterling (*La peinture médiévale à Paris, 1300-1500*, (Paris 1987), 90) mentions these new 'seeing aids' in his discussion of image miniaturization. He cites the mentions noted by Victor Gay (*Glossaire archéologique du Moyen Âge et de la Renaissance*, (Paris, 1928) 2, 97): "1305 : un expectacle pour lire, bordé de leton"; v. 1320, Testament of Marguerite d'Arras: "Et si li donne tous mes anniaus de ké on environne les ieus et tout che qui pent avoec".

³⁴ The earliest recorded use of eyeglasses appears to have been told by the Dominican Giordano da Pisa during a sermon he delivered on 23 February 1306 at the monastery of Santa Maria Novella. "*Non é ancora venti anni che si trovò l'arte di fare gli occhiali, che fanno vedere bene, ch'è una de le migliori arti e de le più necessarie che 'l mondo abbia, e é così poco che ssi trovò : arte novella, che mmai non fu. E disse il lettore : io vidi colui che prima la trovò e fece, e favellaigli*", Giordano da Pisa, *Quaresimale fiorentino, 1305-1306. Edizione critica*, ed. C. Delcorno (Florence 1974), sermon XV, p. 75. ("It is not yet twenty years since there was found the art of making eyeglasses, which make for good vision, one of the best arts and most necessary that the world has. And it is so short a time that this new art, never before extant, was discovered. And the lecturer said: "I saw the one who first discovered and practiced it, and I talk to him".) Translated by Vincent Ilardi, *Renaissance Vision from Spectacles to Telescopes*, (Philadelphia 2007), p. 5.

³⁵ On this topic, see most recently Vincent Ilardi, *Renaissance Vision*. It is worth noting that Giordano da Pisa was in Paris between 1282 and 1286, which corresponds to the period when he first encountered 'occhiali'.

The art of grisaille in the workshop of Jean Pucelle

Use of gray monochrome, otherwise known as grisaille³⁶, in the work of Jean Pucelle is one of the major aspects of his stylistic and technical identity. This particular technique is found, to differing degrees, in three manuscripts. While the *Hours* and the *Breviary of Jeanne d'Evreux* are executed entirely in grisaille, such monochromatic illuminations are found solely in the first two leaves of the second volume of the *Belleville Breviary*. This quantitative distinction is in line with the chronology of the work because the art in the *Breviary* preceded that of the two other manuscripts. Moreover, another distinction should be drawn within this technique between semi-grisaille, which combines other colors with grisaille, and what might be called "full" grisaille. Pucelle practices both; they yield different visual effects and result from two different conceptions of gray camaïeu.

The *Hours* and *Breviary of Jeanne d'Evreux* have the same palette in which gray and its fullest gradations from the lightest to the darkest appear alongside bright colors dominated by blue and red, and light colors such as pale blue or pink which render objects or furniture. The figures, like some objects or elements of decoration, are portrayed in grisaille, and appear in images whose color accents are primarily reserved for background ornamentation. The grisaille figures of the Adoration of the Magi and the Entombment in the *Hours of Jeanne d'Evreux*, like those of Jesus walking on water (f. 115v) and the Ascension (f. 132v) in the *Breviary of Jeanne d'Evreux*, stand out against vivid red backgrounds. The images there are rendered in a strong interplay of contrasts juxtaposing completely unsaturated surfaces, where the blank parchment shows through in places, with areas of vibrant color. The silhouettes of the figures, drawn with a strong black line, are modeled not by minute hatching or crosshatching as in the full-color manuscripts, but rather by the erasure of the gray, applied

³⁶ The term 'grisaille' is of modern origin, and appears to have originated with Fabri de Pereisc at the beginning of the seventeenth century (Michaela Krieger, *Grisaille als Metapher*, 3). Medieval terminology employs "de blanc et de noir" in reference to this type of painting: "Item unes petites heures de Nostre Dame, nommées Heures de Pucelle, enluminées de blanc et de noir...". Jules Guiffrey, *Inventaires de Jean, duc de Berry* (Paris, 1894-1896) 1: 223, n° A. 850.

dry, to reveal the parchment surface below. Gradations of color are therefore achieved not by diluting gray with white (or, as in other colors, by reworking a median color base to darken or lighten it), but instead through black ink associated sometimes with brown or bluish paint applied to the parchment like a pastel wash. It is in the softness with which the color disappears on the parchment that powerful effects of volume are achieved. Once again, image miniaturization makes it impossible for the eye to seize the technical steps of the rendering; instead it broadens into a viewing where the volume of the figures and the modeling of the drapery prevail. The illusion of volume is strengthened by the saturated color grounds or, on the contrary, softened by lighter-toned grounds with busy motifs. In this way powerful contrasts are achieved between the representations of the Entombment and the Flight into Egypt facing each other on folios 82v and 83 of the *Hours of Jeanne d'Evreux*. The brick red ground with its motif of St. Andrew's crosses against which the Entombment is depicted allows the artist to make the contorted bodies of the grieving holy women surge forth, investing their tormented poses with their full dramatic power. Not only does the grisaille contrast with the color, but the flat geometric pattern of the ground reinforces the volume of the forms. Inversely, the Holy Family in the Flight into Egypt is arranged against a ground of bluish tones similar to the grisaille in which the figures themselves are rendered. The background foliage and dragon motifs are delimited and modeled by this same gray color. The image appears as a whole, combining ground and figures. The strength of the modeling emerges nevertheless because of its gradation, from the background toward the viewer's space.

In the images rendered on a free background – that is, freely placed on the page and whose format is not constrained by a frame – the relationship between the grisaille and the other colors develops differently. In the drolleries or line endings, as numerous in the *Hours* as in the *Breviary* of queen Jeanne, gray is often associated with an orange-tinged brown, a

color assigned primarily to the rendering of the skin of faces and hands. This same association is found in the images of the Arrest of Christ and the Crucifixion in the Cloisters manuscript, where there are no frames; they are placed on a background of unpainted parchment. Many white highlights support the modeling of the figures and clothing, sowing luminous accents within the images and marking the most pronounced projections showing volume. And yet it is this model of monumental composition³⁷ applied to a miniature format which lends to the Crucifixion its visual force and gives it a bulk equal to that of the adjacent Adoration of the Magi where the bodies are worked in pale grisaille and emerge forcefully from the vibrant red background. The same is true of the Arrest of Christ where the density of the composition, built on the overlapping of the bodies of the many actors in the scene, contrasts with the hollowed, partly empty space of the Virgin's house on the adjacent leaf. These images, presented two by two as if in opposition to each other, build up each others' illusionistic depth, for grisaille alone appears less effective in this domain than when it is associated with grounds of other colors. The drolleries and line endings also appear less three-dimensional and additionally contrast with the historiated letters where the figures emerge from grounds of saturated colors, as do those in the miniatures.

The sources of grisaille in the work of Jean Pucelle

There is no doubt that the appearance of the technique of grisaille in the work of Jean Pucelle should be set in direct relationship to his draftsmanship, but also to his deep knowledge of the decorative arts in Italy and Paris at the beginning of the fourteenth century. While his travels in Italy did expose him to the grisaille paintings by Giotto in the Scrovegni Chapel in Padua, the technique of grisaille as it was practiced by the French painter sprang from the traditional art of illumination, rather than from processes developed in fresco by his

³⁷ The Crucifixion in the *Hours of Jeanne d'Evreux* is a simplified rendering of the composition of the Crucifixion in Duccio's *Maestà*. François Avril, *Les Fastes du gothique*, 292.

Italian contemporary. The hypothesis which has it that one of Pucelle's sources in this field is his familiarity with Italy in the early Trecento does not stand up well to scrutiny³⁸. Indeed, the representations of the Virtues and Vices on the lowest register of the side walls of the Paduan chapel, which Giotto painted in the years 1303-1305, are interrelated with the simulated marble panels that they alternate with and whose fictive material they recall³⁹. Here the painter was striving for the illusion of white marble *ronde-bosse* sculptures in niches placed in front of colored marble panels⁴⁰. To render this, the artist used gray *camaïeu* to give the illusion of bulk and make the statues surge forth into the viewer's space. The effect is the more striking as it contrasts with the serial legibility of the scenes of the life of Christ painted above, and even more so with the two fictive, empty niches in the lower part of the diaphragm arch that opens onto the choir. Spatial illusionism and *trompe l'œil* thus form an exceptional whole here in the early fourteenth century. The dexterity with which Giotto mastered the exercise recalls his affinity for the "concrete presence" of the individual in his work⁴¹ and explains its impact on his contemporaries. Jean Pucelle's sources are altogether different. His ambition in using *grisaille* was not to yield *trompe l'œil* representing an art other than painting. Rather, he was pursuing and developing the art of ink drawing, of which he was an uncontested virtuoso, and linking it to some of the precious decorative arts, such as metalwork or ivory carving, for which his workshop apparently was a purveyor of models.

The originality of what Pucelle proposes in the two manuscripts executed for the queen, Jeanne d'Evreux, and on two folios of the *Belleville Breviary* lies above all in the association of one technique originating in the "pourtraict d'encre" and the rendering of the

³⁸ Kathleen Morand, *Jean Pucelle*, 12-13 ; Charles Sterling, *La peinture médiévale à Paris*, 1 : 95.

³⁹ On this topic, see most recently: Francesca Capanna and Antonio Guglielmi, "L'intonaco giottesco per la realizzazione dei finti marmi: riflessioni e comparazioni sui procedimenti esecutivi", In *Giotto nella cappella Scrovegni: materiali per la tecnica pittorica. Studi e ricerche dell'Istituto centrale per il restauro*, ed. Giuseppe Basile (Rome 2005), 73-83; Laura Jacobus, *Giotto and the Arena Chapel: Art, Architecture and Experience* (London/Turnhout 2008).

⁴⁰ Visual echos with marble must have had an even greater impact because real marble was the building material of the no longer extant pulpit and chancel screen, in addition to the square leading up to the chapel.

⁴¹ Daniel Arasse, *L'Homme en perspective. Les Primitifs d'Italie* (Genève 1986), 15.

three dimensions through color in the wake of Maître Honoré⁴². The practice of "pourtraict d'encre" was established in northern France and Parisian circles at the end of the thirteenth century⁴³. Most often combined with color washes, these images in which drawing is paramount are witnesses of the practice and interest in the milieu of artists and patrons for technical simplification combined with an understated palette. This is attested by the illuminations of the *Douai Bestiary* (Douai, Bibl. Mun., Ms. 711)⁴⁴ ca. 1270-1275, the *Roman de Fauvel* by Gervais du Bus (Paris, BnF fr. 146)⁴⁵ ca. 1315-1320, and a collection containing, among other works, the *Livre du Trésor* by Brunetto Latini and the *Roman de Fauvain* by Raoul Le Petit from 1326 (Paris, BnF fr. 571). The technique developed in tandem with secular texts and contemporary literature like the new redaction of the *Vie de saint Denis* written at Saint-Denis between 1318 and 1319, of which one version is illustrated with drawings highlighted with brown ink washes (Paris, BnF lat. 5286)⁴⁶.

Pucelle's reputation as a "pourtrayeur"⁴⁷ is attested by the commissioning of the design of the great seal of the Confraternity of Saint-Jacques-aux-Pèlerins between 1319 and 1324⁴⁸. This royal commission whose execution demonstrates the artist's innovative talent in revising the traditional composition of confraternity seals, proves not only the artist's importance in the milieu of aristocratic patrons, but also resonates with the presence of drawing in his oeuvre as a whole. All of the manuscript images produced by Pucelle's shop do in fact bear traces of

⁴² François Avril, "Maître Honoré et son cercle", In *L'Art au temps des rois maudits. Philippe le Bel et ses fils 1285-1328*, exhibition catalogue, Paris, Galeries nationales du Grand-Palais, 17 March - 29 June 1998, 272-280.

⁴³ On this topic, see the study by Inès Villela-Petit, "Historié de blanc et de noir: La tradition du 'portrait d'encre' dans l'enluminure parisienne des XIVe et XVe siècles", In *Les rapports des arts monochromes à la couleur*, conference proceedings, Tours CESR, eds. Maurice Brock, Marion Boudon-Machuel, Pascale Charron (forthcoming, 2011).

⁴⁴ François Avril, *L'art au temps des rois maudits*, 293; <http://www.enluminures.culture.fr>

⁴⁵ François Avril, *Les Fastes du gothique*, 285-286 and Charles Sterling, *La peinture médiévale à Paris*, 1: 62-66; <http://mandragore.bnf.fr>

⁴⁶ Charlotte Lacaze, *The Vie de St. Denis Manuscript (Paris, BnF Ms fr. 2090-2092)*, (New York-London 1979), 355-368.

⁴⁷ Term used by François Avril (*Les Fastes du Gothique*, 293) to describe Jean Pucelle.

⁴⁸ "A Jehan Pucele, pour pourtraire le grand scel de la confrérie, IIIs.", published by Kathleen Morand, *Jean Pucelle*, 31. On the same subject, see the essay by Marc Gil in this volume: "Jean Pucelle and the Parisian Seal-Engravers and Goldsmiths".

underlying line drawings which appear below pale, unsaturated colors. Drawn in black ink, they testify to preparatory work which set up not only the general forms of compositions, but also the drapery, the articulation of gestures, and the waves and curls of hair. The importance of draftsmanship in the oeuvre also emerges from the outline of the image frames in the *Hours of Jeanne d'Evreux*. These employ architectural motifs and are drawn with a plume and black ink. The lines cross sometimes and continue slightly beyond the motif, while those of the various architectural members overlap, thus hindering the rendering of perspective for the motif while revealing its linear construction (Entombment and Flight into Egypt, ff. 82v and 83). Such dexterity enabled him to grasp and exploit the architectural perspective that he had encountered in Italian art. The construction of architectural perspective is the object of very careful preparation. The lines are ruled with a steady hand, each architectural protrusion or motif giving rise to a preliminary drawing and the continuation of orthogonals beyond the limits of the motif (*Miracles de Notre-Dame*, f. 70, Miracle of the icon of the Virgin struck in the knee by an arrow). The practice of drawing in Pucelle's oeuvre is therefore one of its essential aspects. Because of this the artist came into his own by developing the technique of grisaille in the tradition of the ink "pourtraicts" practiced by his contemporaries. Meanwhile, he also pursued his quest for volume as he explored this new technique. His work in monochrome offers an additional possibility alongside full color for bringing out forms and making light glint off of materials and surfaces. It is certainly for this reason that he chose semi-grisaille rather than full grisaille: to take full advantage of contrasts between light and shadow, and to render depth more fully. To do so, he was inspired by the esthetics of precious metalwork in the early fourteenth century, and adopted its palette and arrangement of colors.

"There is no doubt that Pucelle knew the northern enamels which were in fashion around 1300, with their reserved, inlaid motifs on a blue or red enamel ground."⁴⁹ Marie-Madeleine Gauthier's assertion in her seminal work on medieval enamels perfectly puts the illuminator's oeuvre into perspective within the artistic production of his time. Some enamels from northern workshops of the early fourteenth century present associations of colors and agreements of tones identical to those produced by Pucelle. Forthright pure hues (sapphire, emerald, aquamarine, topaz⁵⁰) feature alongside less straightforward ones (greenish amber, pale orange, yellow gray, olive green, purplish brown, slate, anthracite⁵¹), while the silver bas-reliefs below the enamel recall works in grisaille. These likenesses, which have to do with the part played by the artist in the creation of precious metalwork objects – a question addressed and developed by Marc Gil in this volume – should also help deepen our understanding of Pucelle's visual culture and his ties with the artists active in the capital at that time. Undoubtedly Jean Pucelle (as his patrons and his works attest) is one of the major names in the pictorial production of his time. While Pucelle's formal and iconographic repertoire nourished his generation and his successors, his contemporaries viewed his color palette likewise, as a proposal for change and renewal of the artistic repertoire that was theirs for the taking.

Traduction de Raeleen Chai-Elsholz

⁴⁹ Marie-Madeleine Gauthier, *Émaux du Moyen Âge* (Fribourg, 1972), 259.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 260.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*